

BARRINGTON REPORT

Phase I

2.6.09

The Broudy Group
448 Park Ave.
Portsmouth, RI 02871

“Whatever the past is, we can’t afford it now.”

“We need to establish a baseline of facts, around which to have a discussion.”

“The acute phase is over; we are on the slow and careful building state; the crisis is over.”

“Kids should be worried about their parents’ reactions, not the police.”

“Town is focusing on the symptoms (deaths) not the causes.”

“We need to be a catalyst for a new conversation based on current facts.”

“No one is talking to each other.”

“I’ve been wanting to talk, but I didn’t want my son singled out.”

“Why should I feel like I need to protect my own child in my own town?”

“There’s no place to get an answer on what to say to the other parent, if you know their kid is drinking.”

“There’s not a lot of middle ground.”

**“The way you move from a group is by ‘falling off’.
”When kids start to fall off, they fall down.”**

“People are sick of talking about it.”

“The Police Department rules the town.”

“The High School needs a female in administration.”

“There is no such thing as the Group of 20.”

“Drinking is almost inevitable; denial almost encourages continued use - makes no sense to me.”

“Kids need inner authority.”

“Barrington kids are on the low end of drinking statistics.”

“The town should be more than its schools”

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“We will continue to divide if we don’t come together”

- Barrington town resident

Summary of Purpose

The town of Barrington has been challenged to address the issues and conflicts surrounding the problem of underage drinking in town. This challenge has been exacerbated by what seems to be a disproportionately high number of fatalities involving teenagers and alcohol. These tragedies have been highlighted by a considerably hotter spotlight than most towns experience in similar circumstances. It has caused both extrinsic and intrinsic criticism of the town, which has led the town to self-reflect.

The Broudy Group was hired in August 2008 to assist the town in that self-reflection, and to make recommendations for “next steps” the town might take in order to: a.) alleviate the conflict and tension surrounding this issue and b.) reduce the risk of another fatality. By conducting an informal study on the subject of underage drinking, and the surrounding conflicts, The Broudy Group has been able to take a broad “pulse” of the town’s hopes and fears on the subject. We are not substance abuse experts, and our job does not involve taking sides in the ongoing debates on the subject of underage drinking. Instead, we offer a mirror, reflecting the collective thinking of a cross-section of town citizens and officials. From that mirror we offer some recommendations to improve the fabric of the community of Barrington, with the ultimate goal of keeping everyone in Barrington safe and connected

PHASE I - THE INTERVIEWS

I. Orientation to this report:

A. Goals

Our goal for Phase I has been to help the town reach a greater understanding of the wide range of issues that underlie the struggles related to underage drinking in Barrington. By uncovering common interests among the different and differing groups, and by facilitating conversations amongst and between those individuals and groups (*Phase 2*), we hope to help the town build towards the community it wants to be.

B. Methodology

We conducted 28 informational interviews, some in small groups. The same set of questions was used in each interview. We held the interviews in locations chosen by the participants, or in the Barrington Library Conference Room. The average length of each interview was 1 ½ - 2 hours. In designing our interview, we used an open-ended first question, asking the interviewee what he or she would most like to talk about in relation to underage drinking in Barrington. This combination of ample time and an open-ended first question gave our interviewees the opportunity to reflect thoroughly in their responses. We found that underlying the theme of underage drinking, emerged a consistent shared interest in, and profound desire for, **a safe and connected community**.

In light of the importance we place on confidentiality, we cannot list the names of the 40+ people we interviewed. However, to give you a sense of the landscape of our interview process, we can say we had interviews with people from the following demographics:

- Town Administrators, Committee members
- School Administrators, School Committee members

- BHS Students:
 - Current (9-12)
 - Alumni
 - Substance users
 - Non-users
- Barrington Parents:
 - Current
 - Past
 - High School
 - Middle School
 - Experienced/associated with recent accidents
 - Involved in Bdadds or with official town committee capacity
 - Long family history in Barrington
 - “New” to Barrington
 - Varied economic brackets
 - Positioned on both sides of the underage-drinking continuum (from zero-tolerance to favoring a lower drinking age)

C. Our Report

Our report will show you: a MAP of where you have been, where you are, and where you are going as a town; themes that have contributed to the cultural picture of Barrington; things that are working well in Barrington; and finally, next-step recommendations to help you move towards the town you want to be. In addition, we outline ideas about how we can be most useful in Phase II of this project.

“Whatever the past is, we cannot afford it now”

- Barrington town resident

II. Results

A. The Map (past, present and future)

Building Up to Crisis: Over the last decade, several tragic accidents have occurred, some fatal. Media attention to Barrington has increased volatility among town citizens; the community has developed factions; and underage drinking remains an on-going concern.

Height of Crisis: July 2007 to November 2007.

Reactions: Among the cumulative effects are helplessness and loss, complicated grieving, and polarization. Some parents are afraid to talk. The town moves towards change.

The Town in Position: A dedicated police chief, a focused and committed substance abuse leader, a high school principal who is striving to meet the needs of his students, an experienced school superintendent, and two enthusiastic new members on the school committee all help to pave the way towards positive change.

Vision for the Future: Barrington wants to be a community that provides, fosters, and engenders safety, well-being and trust of its members.

B. Contributing Cultural Themes

“We always had kids at our house; no more.”

- Barrington town resident

Changes affecting the community culture

- Dual income families; pressure results when both parents work.
- Changing roles for men and women
- Increasing pressure for advanced education
- Higher costs for college
- Challenges to job security
- Technological advances
- Information overload
- Changes in the nature of privacy due to the Internet
- Greater mobility

Kids

- Pressure for success: academic, social and athletic
- Fewer kids working after school and at week-end jobs
- Unclear expectations and mechanisms for building sense of responsibility in children

Parents

- Busy, pulled in many directions
- Many parents don't know their neighbors
- Residential mobility
- Fear of speaking out (reprisals)
- Some parents feel disenfranchised and alienated from the community

- Some parents feel that decisions around family lifestyles have been taken away from them with social host laws.
- Unclear expectations and mechanisms for building sense of responsibility in children.

The particular effects on the town of the July 2007 tragedy

- Unavailability of comprehensive detailed information because of legal conditions leads to speculation and value judgments.
- Value judgments in the community lead to inhibition of discussion.
- In spite of detailed Police reports, there is not enough information about the accident to help people feel they fully understand it, thus, hindering them from “working through” the grieving process and reaching closure.
- Excessive and negative media coverage increases sensitivity and inhibition to free and open discussion about this event.
- Disturbing nature of this particular accident also inhibits free and open discussion.

“Conflict Themes” in evidence:

- Conflict locks up energy that could be directed towards a shared goal.
- Good communication decreases misunderstanding and value judgments.
- Hard data decreases misunderstanding and value judgments.
- Respect for each other’s decision-making function/role allows collaboration.

The overarching **MAIN THEME** emerging from our interviews is:

A profound wish for a safe and connected community

C. Things that are Working Well in Barrington

- Proactive commitment by the town (Police Department, BAY Team, schools) to deal with underage drinking
- Initiating alcohol education in earlier grades at school
- Recent gathering of representatives from more than 14 cities and towns, including Barrington, to explore and share strategies to limit underage drinking
- Successful senior orientation implemented at Barrington High
- Some evidence (interview-based) that younger siblings and friends have become more aware of consequences to dangerous behaviors based on the tragedies of 2005-2007
- Popularity of organized dances and dodge ball nights among high school students
- Publication by the PTO of directory of names and addresses of students in order to make it easier for families to contact each other
- B-DADDS efforts to bring families together to talk
- Excellent educational and athletic programs, leading to successful college admissions for BHS students
- Town Council's taking action - hiring consultant team to study the problem

“Kids have to be part of the solution...the only way to stop it (underage drinking) is for kids to stop it”
- Barrington town resident

III Recommendations – Next Steps

NOTE: While we recognize that some of these recommendations have already been considered, and/or implemented, the suggestions below are representative of community concerns and ideas. Until the community is made aware of work done in these areas the concerns will continue. Replace opinion and conjecture with data.

A. Create an ALCOHOL RESEARCH THINK TANK

(A subcommittee of the Bay Team)

- Research and assess efficacy of the alcohol curriculum used in elementary/middle/high school.
- Survey alcohol-related challenges and successes in comparable towns; compare to other curricula.
- Does zero-tolerance work? Examine the effectiveness of zero-tolerance policies in reducing underage drinking.
- SAFE RIDES: conduct research on other SR programs – efficacy, challenges and successes (e.g. Ridgefield, CT; Palo Alto, CA).
- Compare and contrast Barrington with other demographically similar towns in terms of:
 - Number of alcohol related deaths – teens and adults
 - How families educate kids about alcohol use at home
 - Implementation and effects of social host laws
 - Substance abuse task force initiatives similar to BAY Team
- Compile a written report on some or all of these topics and present at public forum (one-year time frame for completion).

Think Tank to include:

Bay Team representative

2 parents or other community members (willing to do research)

2 BHS students (interested in research/subject)
 Representative from Alcohol and Addiction Studies at Brown
 Social Norms representative
 Liquor Storeowner

B. Police Department

Interface with Community

- Enhance any existing mechanism whereby parents can come and voice concerns, speak confidentially and ask for advice privately.
- Provide opportunities for interested groups to get information about the law.

C. BAY Team

Create **Alcohol Research Think Tank** (see above)

Conduct “Open Forums” every 6 months for information sharing and feedback with families.

- Collaborate with interested community members in planning and implementing forums.
- Include Alcohol Research Think Tank and B-DADD representation.
- Consider scheduling some monthly BAY Team meetings in late afternoon/evening so that people who are not free mid-day are able to come.

NOTE: Our interviews strongly suggest that many people in Barrington *perceive* the Bay Team as advocating a “zero tolerance” position on underage drinking. While a zero tolerance position is a clear mandate of the Police Department, as spelled out by underage drinking laws, it may not serve the purpose of the BAY Team to be identified so closely

with the mission of the Police Department. If a goal of the BAY Team is to educate in order to reduce and/or prevent teenage drinking, and to change the culture in Barrington around drinking, it is important that the BAY Team not be identified with zero-tolerance. Such identification could inhibit some teens and adults from making better use of the education and support that the BAY Team has to offer. The doors should be wide open to all.

We recommend that the Police Department and the Bay Team continue to clarify their separate missions, and, work more side by side than together. By way of analogy, consider the difference between the two poles of a ladder, as opposed to overlapping circles. The clarification of the Police Department and the BAY Team's separate missions, in support of the same goal - a safe and connected community - will give Barrington citizens different ways to address their needs. This will also shrink the debate about whether or not it is actually *possible* to *stop* underage drinking.

It is our opinion that only the individual – whether teen or adult – can control his or her own behavior. However, the Police Department and the BAY Team, in their separate missions, can each contribute towards the effort of empowering teens, and adults, to take responsibility for their own decisions in the name of safety during these transitional years.

D. Education

High School

- **Freshman Orientation:** Replicate success of senior orientation weekend with incoming freshman class at the beginning of the school year. This gives opportunities for incoming students to experience different social patterning than in middle school.

- **Advisories:**

Assess purpose and efficacy of current advisory program. Include students in assessment

In the interest of the social and psychological comfort of the freshmen, consider sustaining same groupings from middle school CONNECT group program into freshman year advisories. After the freshman year the Advisories can be shuffled.

- **“Moral Imagination”** - The building of conscience.

Review the opportunities in school for students to discuss decision-making dilemmas, ethical choices and/or how to deal with conflict. Consider using advisories for this.

- **Restorative Justice:** Train students in restorative practices.

- **Leadership:**

Provide more leadership opportunities in and out of school.

For example, develop a Youth Government program (different from Student Council). Teens run for office, take on key liaison roles with Town Council, School Committee, BDadds etc., and are voted in by peers to represent their collective views.

School Committee

- **Expand mission** of School Committee to include emotional and social well-being of students

- **Integrate parents and students** more effectively in School Committee meetings.

- **Ensure that School Committee documents** are easily available to community.
- **School Committee member(s) set up “office hours”** in a coffee shop in town for greater access to parents and others.
- **In light of shrinking budgets**, examine the complex relationship between enrichment programs and special needs – “little to be gained by pitting one interest against another. Grow the pie.” Consider possibility of combining with other districts around common interests.

E. B-Dadds (B-Parents)

- Consider changing name to reflect inclusion of women and to identify as a parent group, not a fathers group
- Review mission and structure
- Expand leadership to reflect increased mission and structure
- Reestablish parenting groups at peoples’ houses w/ discussions around specific topics. e.g. What should you do if you hear that someone else’s child is drinking? What is your responsibility, and to whom?
- Research and explore Safe Rides with Alcohol Think Tank
- Develop parent mentors/family support groups as needed
- Support parent advocacy groups (e.g. special ed groups) as needed
- Provide a liaison to police

F. Press Liaison

Town Council appoints an individual or group to make sure the Barrington Times has as much access as possible to the positive stories coming out of Barrington.

G. Teen/Community/Recreation Center

Interested teens and other community members develop an 8 to 10 person group to discuss the following:

- what does the town need?
- who would be served? who is currently not being served?
- what can the town support?
- where should it be?

H. Consider creating a centralized Community Website

The purpose of this website is to make available accurate, up-to-date information on events, issues, committee meetings, parenting groups, discussions, etc....all information which contributes to the town staying informed with itself. This will result in less misinformation, greater transparency, and cross-fertilization of efforts.

The website can be operated by students as an after-school activity, with a school-wide competition for the name of the website.

NOTE: We recommend that each group named above convene within 30 days of receiving the final report to discuss the recommendations that are particular to them.

PHASE II – Community Conversations

“Notice what you care about. Assume that many others share your dreams. Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters. Talk to people you know. Talk to people you don’t know. Talk to people you never talk to. Be intrigued by the differences you hear. Expect to be surprised. Treasure curiosity more than certainty... Trust that meaningful conversations can change your world.”

- Margaret Wheatley

Communication, Collaboration, Consensus

In the service of the primary goal – **A Safe and Connected Community** - Phase II will provide an opportunity for town members to respectfully exchange differing ideas and points of view on topics having to do with underage drinking. Because of the conflict surrounding these topics, the skills needed to run large group meetings, and in order to free the participants from the responsibility of leading these community conversations, The Broudy group strongly suggests that we facilitate these discussions. We will use whatever forum is appropriate - small and large community meetings and dialogues, focus groups, mediations and Restorative Justice Circles.

Our interviews revealed the following topics to be important to the town for discussion. It is up to the subcommittee to decide which of these topics, or others not mentioned, it wants to explore in Community Conversations. Once the subcommittee has made these choices, the Broudy Group will facilitate.

- 1. We are available to assist with any recommendations from Phase I.**
- 2. Exploration and discussion on controversial programs**

The Broudy Group will lead group discussions of interested (including out-spoken) parties on the following subjects:

- Breathalyzer
- SAFE RIDES
- Social Host Law
- Life of an Athlete
- Police efforts to keep students safe on the road.

3. Meetings to clarify roles and missions

We recommend that each of the following two groupings meets twice in the upcoming year, (and once every year following) in order to clarify and maintain the roles and missions of each of its sub-groups. Understanding the nature and limits of each sub-group's roles and missions will enhance collaboration between them. The Broudy Group will be available to lead and facilitate these discussions.

We have clustered the groupings as follows (one municipal, one non-municipal):

The Groupings:

Municipal:

- Town Manager
- Bay Team
- School Dept./School Committee
- Town Council
- Police

Non-Municipal:

- B-Dadds
- PTO
- Clergy
- YMCA
- Students
- Parents
- Alcohol Research Team member

4. Restorative Justice

- Introduce and train schools, police department and interested community members in restorative justice.
- Develop and implement restorative practices that are appropriate to the particular organization being served.
- Use “Talking Circles” for students to share and explore social and academic pressures.

IMPORTANT GOAL

Empower young people at every step possible. Make sure their voices are heard and valued. Make sure they are held accountable - not in punitive terms, but in terms of responsibility. Trust that they can think for themselves, deserve respect, and are capable of doing the “right thing”, and then ask them to live up to it.

The Broudy Group

ATTACHMENT #1

1. Reoccurring Themes and Opinions about

Underage Drinking in Barrington:

*Gleaned from interviews and other community sources
(i.e: newspaper article “comments”)*

1. Teenagers will drink no matter what. Not so much a rite of passage as an inevitability.
2. We are buying into the assumption that teens will drink no matter what. We need to change that assumption to save lives.
3. Teenagers’ brains aren’t really working, so they are not to be trusted.
4. How can teenagers be expected to make good decisions on their own if parents don’t give them a little room to learn from their mistakes while they are still at home?
5. The drinking problems of Barrington teenagers stem from drinking problems of Barrington parents.
6. Barrington is no different than any other town. Just getting the spotlight because of wealth, and series of accidents. The press, and outspoken individuals are the problem.
7. Barrington has always had a drinking problem, and always will.
8. Kids here are drinking during the week. In a less affluent town they’d be working.
9. Is this really a problem, or just bad luck?
10. Is the problem really about “drinking” or is it about “drinking and driving”?
11. This isn’t about drinking and driving, it’s about drinking.
12. The police department has been doing a good job, but should be doing even more to keep these underage drinkers in line.
13. The police department has gone way overboard, getting involved in family lifestyle issues, and “profiling” high school students by randomly pulling them over on the road with no probable cause.

14. There isn't enough to do in Barrington, so kids are bored.
15. Kids are over-programmed and stressed out.
16. The Substance Abuse Task Force is only effective for the kids who are not drinking at all.
17. There has been a change. Kids realize now that they can't drink and drive
18. Liability and legality leads to repression of free discussion, which in turn increases risks, because parents are not talking to each other. And anyone with an axe to grind now has a way to do it.
19. There is a group of parents in town who actually serve alcohol to their kids and their kids' friends called the "Group of 20."
20. There is no such thing as the "Group of 20." And I don't know one single parent who actually serves their teens' friends alcohol.
21. I wish we could go back to the days when parents could decide on their own how to handle these issues, without being under a microscope. We are never going to be able to stop teens from experimenting, so the best thing we can do as parents is help them stay safe.
22. Town doesn't need consultants – just "do something about 'those' parents."

ATTACHMENT #2

SUGGESTED READING

Community: The Structure of Belonging

By Peter Block

Bringing Peace into the Room

Daniel Bowling and David Hoffman

The Little Book of Restorative Justice

By Howard Zehr

The Little Book of Restorative Discipline for Schools

By Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz

The Moral Imagination: the Art and Soul of Building Peace

By John Paul Lederach

The Art of Possibility

By Benjamin Zander and Rosamond Zander

The Price of Privilege: How Parental pressure and material Advantage Are Creating a Generation of Disconnected and Unhappy Kids

By Madeline Levin

Blessings of a Skinned Knee

By Wendy Mogel

Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time

By Margaret Wheatley

Beyond Blame

By Jeffrey Kottler

Getting to Yes

Fisher, Ury and Patton

Peacemaking Circles: From Crime to Community

By Kay Pranniss, Barry Stuart and Mark Wedge

How to Talk so Your Kids will Listen and How to Listen so Your Kids Will Talk

By Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

On the Rocks: Teens and Alcohol

By David Aretha

Addiction-Proof Your Child: A Realistic Approach to Preventing drug, Alcohol, and Other Dependencies

By Stanton Peele

ATTACHMENT # 3**Gleicher's Change Formula**

$$D \times V \times F \times B > R$$

This is a formula that is necessary to overcome resistance to CHANGE work. If any variable is zero, nothing will move.

D = Dissatisfaction with the way things are

V = Vision – what is the vision of the preferred future?

F = First steps – what are the next steps you can take? Concrete action plan

B = Level of believability - do people in process believe that this will make a difference?

R = RESISTANCE

